Hint of Patrolman's Death Came to Widow Via TV

By LANNY THOMAS

The widow of New Orleans police Patrolman Paul A. "Butch" Persigo got the first hint he had been killed by a sniper at the Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge through a television broadcast.

A neighbor and relative of Mrs. Persigo said she called police when she thought she heard her husband's name but got no cooperation from officers.

They said Mrs. Persigo could not verify if her husband had been killed until she ran frantically into the emergency room of Charity Hospital. The Rev. Peter Rogers, O.M.I., police chaplain, verified that Persigo was dead.

ANOTHER TRAGIC aspect of the story is that Mrs. Persigo and her children were grouped around the television set early Sunday afternoon and saw their husband and father in the line of duty.

Mrs. Betty Dufour, a neighbor and close friend of the Persigo family, said Mrs.. Persigo took a photograph of her husband on TV.

"He was standing by a fire engine holding his rifle toward the building," said Mrs. Dufour. Mrs. Dufour said it is believed that Persigo was dead at the time the family saw him on TV. The telecast was not live.

The family is disturbed that Mrs. Persigo "had to learn about this on TV," said Charles Persigo, a brother of the patrolman.

"I'm not blaming anyone," said Mrs. Dufour. "I'm just bitter that my friend had to find out about her husband over TV."

Mrs. Dufour said Mrs. Persigo heard the name of a police victim mentioned on television that had a pronunciation similar to that of Persigo and became worried. "Everyone mispronounces their name," said Mrs. Dufour.

Mrs. Dufour said Mrs. Persigo called the police department and was told by someone, "I'm sorry, but we can't give out any information." She said the television station also was unable to assist Mrs. Persigo.

Mrs. Persigo kept watching the television and several minutes later heard the name again—this time sounding more like Persigo.

Mrs. Dufour quoted Mrs. Persigo as saying: " 'That's too close for comfort.' " The policeman's wife, along with relatives, then drove to Charity Hospital, where they were given the grim news.

Mrs. Dufour said the family is upset because apparently no one tried to telephone Mrs. Persigo. She said the telephone was not in use all afternoon.

It is police policy to notify the next of kin in any death before releasing the name to the news media.